MEMORIAL

OF THE

Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania.

The Committee of the Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania, appointed to prepare a memorial to the Legislature "setting forth the number and condition of the insane of this Commonwealth, and the urgent necessity for more extended means for their proper care and treatment," would respectfully present the following facts and statements, drawn from the observation and experience of those who have specially devoted their time and attention to this unfortunate class of our fellow citizens.

The exact number of the insane in this State cannot be definitely stated, as no effort has yet been made to provide a full and careful enumeration of them, and it is therefore requisite to make an approximate estimate, founded on the known relation of the number of insane to the whole population. This number will vary with the length of time which has elapsed since the settlement of any particular community, the character of the inhabitants, and their occupation in the various trades and professions, and with various other causes, which tend to produce an artificial state of life in that community, with all its unnatural excitements and depressions. In older settlements the number will of course be greater than in newly settled regions, and the average of the whole will enable a reasonably correct statement to be made. If, in the older portions of the State, the average be one insane person to every eight hundred of the population, and in the more recently settled parts, one in every twelve hundred persons,—an average

of these numbers will give one in every thousand of the whole population, and this will be found to be very nearly the correct number.

The total population of the State will be very nearly, if not quite, 3,500,000. This number may be obtained by taking the number of taxables and multiplying by five; but, in addition to this, there will always be in our cities and in the mining districts a large number who are not taxables, but who require a large amount of care, and from whom come a very large number of those who are dependent on the community for proper treatment in sickness from ordinary diseases, or in insanity. With this population, on the average before given, there will be 3,500 insane in the State of Pennsylvania.

But this number will not remain a constant quantity, nor will the restorations and the number of deaths be such as to give reason, in the course of a few years, to hope for its gradual extinction; but as the population will increase at the rate of nearly one hundred thousand in each and every year, as it has done in the course of the seven years just past, an addition will be made each year in the proportion of about twenty in every hundred who may be attacked. If prompt treatment in the early stages be not provided, the proportion which will continue insane of those attacked will be much greater than that just stated. Beyond this regular increase corresponding with the increase of the population, there will not be found any actual addition to the number of insane in any given community.

Of the whole number of the insane (3,500) in the State, there are about 1,500 in the different hospitals provided for the insane, and about 500 in the poor houses of the different counties, leaving 1,500 entirely unprovided for, and thrown on the care of friends, or on the charity of the people of the different sections of the State.

The condition of those who are not in hospitals, calls for urgent and instant relief. In very few of the poor houses are there any proper accommodations for them, and even in those which have provided proper rooms for them, the provision is professedly only

for those who have been insane for a term of years. In many poor houses, the rooms in which the insane are confined, are very small and close, with no means of admitting a proper supply of fresh air, either in summer or winter, and being in the basement, are often extremely cold in winter and exceedingly uncomfortable at all times; others are confined in rooms exposed to the idle gaze of every passer-by, and too often their excitement is aggravated by the unfeeling taunts and reproaches of the vicious and heedless; males and females are placed in adjoining, and often in opposite rooms, even in that state of excitement when they will wear no clothing, and have only the covering of a blanket or quilt, and that not used probably except during a small part of the day or at night, with the doors of the rooms so arranged with lattice work or openings that any one can look in at pleasure. Males and females are too often allowed to mingle freely in the yards and the halls during the day. In many places many insane are kept in the jails for want of any other accommodations.

In different parts of the State, whether under the care of relatives or of the township authorities, they are kept confined in small rooms specially built for them, where they remain constantly; their food being passed in to them through a small opening left for the purpose, and no means of exercise afforded them. It is not very unusual to find a number of the insane in different poor houses with a chain on the ankle and fastened to a staple in the floor, allowing only a few feet of motion around a fixed point.

The want of more suitable provision on the part of the authorities having charge of the poor in different sections, arises in part from ignorance of the best course to be adopted, but principally from the fear that the expenditures necessary for their proper care and treatment will not be properly understood and appreciated by the respective communities which they represent. Attention has never been properly drawn to the subject, and consequently very few have given to it that careful thought and deliberation which would be requisite for a clear understanding of the requirements of the insane. We assert, without fear of successful contradiction, that, could the whole community of any county be fully aroused

to the condition of the insane in the poor house of that county, they would soon insist on a change, not only in the accommodations, but in other matters relative to their proper care and treatment. At this time custodial care is all that is attempted to be exercised; there are no arrangements for regular daily visits of the physician; no means of regular exercise; no opportunities for amusement or recreation of any kind, and, in fact, none of those appliances which are now looked upon as necessary for the proper treatment of the insane; and yet many recent cases are taken to those institutions, and while one will now and then recover, the majority will sink into a state of chronic insanity. In nearly one half of the counties of Pennsylvania there are no provisions of any kind for the care of their insane.

The Hospital accommodations thus far provided by the State, consist of the Pennsylvania State Lunatic Hospital at Harrisburg, which was designed to accommodate 300 patients, but, during the past year, has had all its wards crowded, and as many as 360 patients under care at one time; and the Western Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane near Pittsburgh, which has been overcrowded, in those portions of the building now in use, for more than a year past, and the completion of which, to the extent originally designed, would be an act of great relief to the large number of the insane still unprovided for in the western district.

Insanity arises from disease of the body or from disorder of some of the bodily functions; and prompt and proper treatment is required to remove such disordered conditions as much as in other diseases of the body; and the uniform experience of all who have devoted time and attention to the subject, teaches that the sooner the proper treatment, not simply medical, but hygienic, is adopted, the earlier will the insanity be removed. Occasional cases may occur where the insanity is recovered from without any positive medical and hygienic treatment, just as there are cases of other diseases which will and do recover without medical treatment; but to argue that, because one case may be restored without medical and hygienic treatment, all others will do or may do the same, is to contradict the plainest teachings of experience, and to consign a large number of persons to chronic hopeless insanity.

Experience and observation have also as clearly shown that hospitals properly constructed and managed, are the only places where the treatment of insanity can be fully carried out to a successful result. The removal from old exciting scenes and associations, the occupation of the mind with that great variety of means which are now classed as moral treatment, constant watchfulness to remove any causes of disease, and to prevent injurious influences acting on the individual, with proper regulation of diet, exercise, clothing and every hygienic means which modern science can claim, can only be effectually carried out in an institution specially fitted up for the purpose, with officers who devote their whole time to the duties thus required of them.

The financial aspect of the subject deserves careful examination and consideration. Every person becoming insane deducts so much from the producing power of the community, and is to that extent an incumbrance or a mortgage on the property and income of the Commonwealth or of some of its parts, collectively or individually, to the extent of the cost of his or her support, so long as the insanity shall continue. The individual's estate pays, if it can; but, if not, the public must, for the body politic is the bondsman for every one in sickness and poverty to pay what he cannot. The cost of keeping an insane person at home, in a poorhouse, or a jail, is not less than three dollars a week on the average, and this must be multiplied by as many weeks as the insanity shall continue.

The average duration of life of an insane person, not cured, attacked between 20 and 30, is 21.31 years; attacked between 30 and 40, is 20.64 years; attacked between 40 and 50, is 17.65 years; that is, insane, when taken near 20 to 30 years old, will, if not restored, live on an average 1,118 weeks, and will cost $3,354 for their support. Those 30 to 40 when taken will live 1,073 weeks and cost $3,219, and those who 40 to 50 when taken will live 917 weeks and cost $2,751.

These are sums which the people must pay, they are debts incurred the moment the man becomes insane, and are a mortgage on the public property until these patients are restored. This, however, is not all the cost of insanity neglected and uncured; the

Commonwealth loses all the services of these men, all that they would have earned during a sane life, if they are restored. The probable longevity or average time sane men will live after 20 to 30 years, is 39.12 years; after 30 to 40, 32.76 years; and after 40 to 50, it is 26.06 years. Then the public must not only pay the cost of supporting an uncured insane person when between 20 to 30 years for 1,118 weeks, but lose his earnings for 2,034 weeks. The earnings of course will vary with person, capacity, position and circumstances.

In England the prospective earnings over and above the cost of the support of an unskilled laborer, at 25 years of age, are worth $1,157; that is, an annuity equal to this profit on his labor through his probable life could be bought at that age for this sum. The earnings are more in America; the cost of living for laborers and others is about the same; hence the profits of life are greater and the annuity worth more. We may safely add 50 per cent. and more, and estimate the annuity as worth at least $1,800 for the unskilled laborer; for the mechanic, trader and professional man it is worth more. Then if an unskilled laborer becomes insane at 25, this annuity is lost to him, to his family, and the body politic, unless he be restored and the annuity regained.

Let us next consider the cost of restoration. For those whose disease was less than one year before admission, the period of restoration has been found, on calculation of returns, to have been somewhat over five months. But if taken earlier and treated as promptly as fever, pneumonia, etc., the time required for cure is much less. The cost of this restoration, even including interest on the Hospital and all other expenses in our State institutions, will not exceed five dollars a week; that is, about $130 for each insane person restored. If taken early 80 per cent. at least can be restored, and 20 per cent. will either die or remain insane for life.

The recent cases of insanity are always more expensive to take care of from the greater attention required, their disposition to destroy clothing, furniture and fixtures. The cost of the curative experiment must include both that paid for those who are curable, and for the attempt to restore the incurable during an average

period required to determine the question of their curability, say two years, or for such as are restored to power, $260.

It must however be remembered that this estimate of cost allows the whole expense of the Hospital to be five dollars a week for each patient. In calculating the cost of the effort to cure we should only include the increased expense of support for this purpose, over and above what would necessarily otherwise have been incurred.

Whether they cure or attempt to cure or not, the public must pay three dollars a week for the patient's support, and the curative process costs only two dollars a week in addition, and only so much then should be charged to place and means of restoration. This cost then should be stated as $104 for each one restored. Taking the English calculations of the present worth of a laboring man at 25, and adding the difference of earnings in this country, an annuity equal to the excess of his earnings over the cost of his support through his probable or average life, 39 years, can be bought for $1,800. The present worth of the cost of his support, if insane, $156 a year, through his probable insane life, 21 years, will be $1,834. Both these are lost, equal to $3,634, if the man is attacked with insanity and not restored, or to state it in other terms, the expense of restoring 80 out of every 100, and of maintaining the 20 during the period necessary to test their curability, say two years, will be equal to $282,900.

In Massachusetts, during the thirten years, 1854 to 1866, one in 1,690 of its people were annually attacked with insanity. This is the proportion sent to its hospitals. It is not probable that a less number are annually attacked in Pennsylvania, and, assuming that to be the proportion, there would be 2,070 persons become insane in one year, and the number would increase with the steady increase of the population. If these are all promptly and properly cared for, 80 per cent. would be restored in an average of six months, and 20 per cent. would either die or remain a burden on their estates, friends or the public for life, and the duration of that life will vary with the period at which the insanity commences.

But we must look at the other side of this question,—the cost of the neglected insane each year to the community. If prompt

and proper treatment be not resorted to on the first appearance of the disease or within a short period thereafter, the proportion of cases restored will be reversed, and in place of 80 per cent. being restored, it will more probably be that number which will continue insane, and thus add greatly to the burden of the community.—Calculating the number of insane likely to occur each year in the present population of Pennsylvania (3,500,000) at 2,070, the number restored by prompt treatment, would be 1,656, while the number remaining insane, would be 414; but if no means of early treatment are afforded, it may be assumed that 1,656 will remain insane, and 414 be restored, and thus each year a fearful burden of expense be added to that already existing. In either aspect of the case a very strong argument is afforded for the provision at the earliest practicable period of the amplest means, for prompt and proper treatment, and, for reasons before assigned, that treatment can only be properly given in hospitals constructed, organized and arranged in accordance with the advanced views of the time.

The Medical Society of Pennsylvania gave a cordial endorsement to the following propositions, unanimously adopted by the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, at their meeting in Washington, in 1866:

1. Every State should make ample and suitable provision for all its insane.

2. That insane persons, considered curable and those supposed incurable, should not be provided for in separate establishments.

3. The large States should be divided into geographical districts of such size, that a hospital situated at or near the centre of each district, will be practically accessible to all the people living within its boundaries and available for their benefit in cases of mental disorder.

4. All State, county and city hospitals for the insane should receive all persons belonging to the vicinage designed to be accommodated by such hospital, who are affected with insanity proper, whatever may be the form or nature of the bodily disease accompanying the mental disorder.

5. All hospitals for the insane should be constructed, organized and managed substantially in accordance with the propositions adopted by the Association in 1851 and 1852 and still in force.

6. The facilities for classification or ward separation possessed by each institution, should equal the requirements of the different conditions of the several classes received by such institutions, whether these different conditions are mental or physical in their character.

Your memorialists do not design to bring forward the arguments necessary to prove the first and second propositions, but they would call attention to some facts which the records and experience of existing hospitals for the insane furnish to prove the correctness of the third proposition. From a carefully prepared statement, made after a thorough examination of all the reports of the different hospitals in this country by Dr. Edward Jarvis, of Dorchester, Massachusetts, (to whom the committee would acknowledge their obligations for many facts and calculations in the former part of this memorial,) it would seem to be established as a fact not admitting of any doubt or dispute, that the majority of all the patients in any given hospital for the insane, come from the section of country most contiguous to the institution, the facilities of travel being always considered. If a hospital for the insane be located as near as may be, having regard to the facilities of communication between different parts of the district, in the centre of the population, great expense will be saved in the conveyance to, and removal from the hospital of those who may require its accommodations, and this item of travelling expense is a very serious one in the majority of cases. Then again the risk to the individual, from the fatigue, the excitement and annoyances attending a journey of any length in a weak and depressed, or in a violently excited condition, is often very great and attended with considerable danger to life.

The friends and relations of the patients in any hospital for the insane often, very naturally, desire to visit them and examine into their condition, more particularly where the case has assumed the chronic form, and the expenses of a long journey often press

heavily on their means, more particularly where the support of the person in the hospital has to be defrayed, in whole or in part, from the amount they derive from their daily labor. The same reasoning will also apply to the authorities of the townships or counties, who are necessarily required to look after the welfare of those entrusted to their charge. Every hospital should also be located in the centre of population of the district, because the most thickly settled sections are those wherein the largest number of insane will be found; and in those parts also will be more readily found those who will be relied on for the various occupations and employments in such institutions, and there also can be had more economically all those supplies of different kinds, which are required in the domestic economy of the institution.

To Pennsylvania belongs the high honor of having first established an institution in the United States for the proper care and treatment of the insane, and while her authorities have not been backward in the promotion and establishment of all those benevolent operations which have aimed at the amelioration and relief of all the unfortunate of every class within her borders, there yet remains much to be done in the establishment of additional institutions for the care and treatment of the most afflicted and most helpless of all her citizens.

While other States have made or are now making ample provision for all the insane within their borders, let it not be said that Pennsylvania, rich in every thing which constitutes the true wealth of a State,—with unlimited resources daily becoming more and more developed, and thus adding to the ability for every good and great enterprize,—falls behind in the provision which she makes for those who have the strongest claim on the sympathy, the benevolence and the liberality of those to whom her inhabitants have entrusted the charge of her public affairs.

Insanity respects no class nor condition, nor can any claim exemption from its visitations; and he who to-day may be in the full possession of high mental powers, and a pride and honor to all his friends and relations, may to-morrow be cast down from that high estate, and be the subject of the keenest anguish and

anxiety to all those who had been accustomed to look up to him for counsel and direction, or on whom they depended for all that makes life desirable and pleasant.

The same distress, the same perplexing anxiety, the same or even greater disquietude at the sad condition of one of its members, often him on whom they leaned for support in all the trials of life, will be found in every family in every section of the Commonwealth, when insanity makes its appearance; and shall it be said that the Legislature of Pennsylvania will not make ample and suitable provision for the care, the treatment, the restoration or the proper custody of all who so much need it, and who are so entirely incompetent, by reason of their great affliction, to plead for themselves?

Your memorialists would therefore very respectfully, but most earnestly, urge the establishment, without delay, of a Hospital for the insane of the district of the State, lying north of a line drawn east and west through the junction of the North and West branches of the Susquehanna river, and east of the Allegheny mountains, and composed of the counties of Wayne, Susquehanna, Wyoming, Luzerne, Columbia, Montour, Sullivan, Bradford, Lycoming, Tioga, Clinton, Centre, Clearfield, Elk, Cameron, M'Kean, Potter, and Forest; and also, if the finances of the State will justify it, one for the district composed of the counties of Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Pike, and Schuylkill; and your memorialists will ever pray that each one of you, in your own persons, and in the members of your families, may be preserved from the visitation of the fearful malady, for the relief of which, in the persons of others, they trust you will speedily make the most ample provision.

On behalf of the Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania,

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